

# HOW TO BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT PROMOTING WOMEN

Published by the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity  
May 15, 2018

*In 2018, LCLD Member firm Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP achieved a major diversity milestone: women now make up half of both the managing partners committee and the executive management team.*

But it's not coincidence that women hold these key leadership roles; Drinker Biddle has been intentional about including, supporting, and promoting women at all levels. LCLD spoke with **Andrew Kassner**, LCLD Member and Chair of Drinker Biddle & Reath, and **Lynne Anderson**, Co-Chair of the firm's Women's Leadership Committee (WLC), about how they've created a culture of support for women.

"This doesn't happen organically," said Anderson. "You really need to have a focus. Five years ago, we rebooted the WLC and began focusing on data-driven metrics that allow us to see where we have the most room for improvement."

After five years of concerted, top-to-bottom efforts to support women, Drinker Biddle reached parity in its elected governing bodies. But for Kassner, that achievement is a measure of ongoing success, not the final goal: "The results of our election are a logical conclusion of the fact that women have been getting more management responsibilities and leadership roles in the firm. All

the women elected were highly qualified and respected within the firm." See below for the steps Drinker Biddle has taken to build an inclusive environment.

## Creating an Environment Where All Women Can Succeed

Kassner and Anderson shared the following suggestions for creating an environment where all women can succeed:

**"Women and men, we're all committed to equality!"**

The Women's Leadership Committee isn't just made up of women, though all female partners and select female associates and counsel take part; men also serve on the committee, including Firm Chair Andrew Kassner.

**"Put your money where your mouth is."**

Drinker Biddle makes it clear that women are a priority by providing the WLC with a "healthy, dedicated" budget, a portion of which is devoted to critical initiatives like business development.

**“The only way to retain your people is to invest in them early on.”**

Firm leadership regularly looks for opportunities to plug women associates and junior partners into key firm committees and other leadership roles, Kassner said.

**“We want to open the doors for opportunity.”**

Many women are equipped for senior leadership roles, but not all of them were aware of the opportunities, Anderson said. So this year, the WLC took an active role in spreading the word about upcoming Managing Partner elections, detailed qualifications and expectations, and worked with interested women to prepare them for candidacy. Before the election, the WLC also circulated a list of female candidates.

**“Clients want women in first-chair positions, but they also need to have experience.”**

Kassner instituted a client visitation program through which he meets one-on-one with senior executives of the firm’s clients and discusses the need for both organizations to provide women with first chair opportunities.

**“We have to push ourselves forward.”**

Part of Drinker Biddle’s renewed commitment to diversity includes better gathering and tracking of diversity data. Last year, the data was presented at a firm-wide

women’s summit and shared with firm leadership, to highlight successes and opportunities for growth.

### **Tapping Into an Open-Door Culture**

In addition to these targeted initiatives, Kassner and Anderson detailed several aspects of Drinker Biddle’s “open-door culture” that benefit all lawyers, not just women:

#### **More transparent review process:**

In addition to annual reviews, which are tied to compensation, associates have quarterly reviews designed to clarify expectations and provide more immediate feedback.

#### **Internal advocate for young attorneys:**

Drinker Biddle’s Career Counselor is a confidential resource from whom associates can get input and feedback on their career progression.

#### **Smarter recruitment:**

For C-suite hires and appointed senior management positions, the firm employs the Rooney/Mansfield Rule to ensure that women and other diverse candidates are considered.

#### **Utilizing mentorship and sponsorship:**

All attorneys at the firm have access to mentors, but Drinker Biddle recognizes that women

and minorities often need additional levels of support and advocacy; the firm is currently piloting a sponsorship program for diverse attorneys.

#### **Democratization of information:**

A new program at the firm requires all attorneys to develop business plans, and the WLC, Professional Development Team, and practice groups provide attorneys with training and programs to support those plans. The WLC also sponsors internal and external events focused on business development, including interactive sessions with the firm’s top women rainmakers.



**Andrew C. Kassner**  
Chairman and CEO  
Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP



**Lynne Anne Anderson**  
Partner  
Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP

